

Science and Art Dept: 1851

Belfast.

THE BELFAST

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# GOVERNMENT SCHOOL OF DESIGN.

ANNUAL CONVERSAZIONE,

AND

Distribution of Prizes and Scholarships.

*From the Belfast News-Letter, March 19, 1851.*

BELFAST:  
PRINTED BY JAMES ALEXANDER HENDERSON, "NEWS-LETTER" OFFICE,  
NO. 10, BRIDGE-STREET.

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# ANNUAL CONVERSAZIONE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS.

YESTERDAY evening, the spacious suite of rooms in the North wing of the Royal Belfast Institution, devoted to the purposes of our local Government School of Design, presented a scene of the most interesting and pleasing character, the occasion being the first annual distribution of the prizes and scholarships awarded to the successful competitors for those honours amongst the male and female students of the institution. Very shortly after the hour announced for throwing open the building to the admission of the public (half-past seven o'clock), the rooms were densely crowded with as brilliant and fashionable an assembly as we have ever seen collected together in Belfast, comprising a great proportion of the rank, aristocracy, fashion, intellect, and beauty, of our Northern Athens and its vicinity. The company were attired in full dress, as for evening promenade, and the whole scene presented the appearance of a gay and happy ball. We should imagine that not fewer than from five to six hundred ladies and gentlemen were present after the last arrivals were set down, among whom were the Lord Bishop of Down and Connor, Mrs. Knox, and several ladies; and the gallant hero of the late Indian war, the veteran Lord Gough, who was accompanied by Lady Gough.

Amongst the numerous and distinguished assemblage we noticed the following:—The Earl of Belfast; Lord Chief Baron Pigot; Major-General Bainbrigge and Staff; Mrs. and the Misses Bainbrigge; Col. Brough; R. Blackiston Houston, Esq., D.L., and Mrs. Houston, Orangefield; W. W. Legge, Esq., D.L., and Mrs. Legge, Malone House; Major Montgomery; Joseph Napier, Esq., M.P.; the President of the Queen's College; J. T. Tennent, Esq., High-Sheriff, and Mrs. Tennent; J. Thomson, Esq., J.P., and Mrs. Thomson, Low-wood; Robt. Thompson, Esq., J.P., Mrs. Thomson and family, Castleton; S. G. Fenton, Esq., J.P.; J. Gibson, Esq., Assistant-Barrister; T. O'Hagan, Esq., Q.C.; G. Robinson, Esq., High-Sheriff, Co. Armagh; Wm. Thompson, Esq.; W. Perrin, Esq., Dublin; Charles Lanyon, Esq., C.E., Mrs. Lanyon, and family; A. J. Macrory, Esq., Duncairn; Robert Macrory, Esq., do.; J. B. Bankhead, Esq., Glenarm; John Herdman, Esq., Mrs. Herdman, and family, Woodville; Dr. McGee and Mrs. McGee, Donegall Square; N. D. Crommelin, John Mulholland, J. Godwin, C.E., Robert Magee, W. Macartney, Barrister-at-Law, John Hind, jun., James Hind, R. Patterson, Esqrs.; Rev. W. K. Lynar, Islandmagee; Rev. Dr. Edgar; James MacAdam, jun., Joseph Bristow, J. O. Woodhouse (Portadown), John Hitchcock (Antrim), G. K. Smith, W. Bottomley, John Holden, R. M'Adam, G. C. Hyndman, W. Coates, J. Henning (Warings-town), Samuel Vance, C. L. Nursey (Head Master of School of Design), D. W. Raimbach (Second Master, do.), C. Bessell (Assistant Secretary, do.), James Campbell, Esqrs., besides several members of the Grand Jury and officers of the garrison, whose names we could not ascertain.

It having been intimated by Mr. Bessell, the Assistant Secretary of the institution, that the chair would not be taken until nine o'clock, the company occupied the interval either in partaking of the refreshments provided for them in one of the apartments, or by promenading through the building and inspecting the various interesting objects of art and manufacture displayed for their notice. At length, nine o'clock having struck, and the Lord Bishop, who was to act as chairman, not having arrived, and the assembly growing impatient, the chair was taken, on the motion of W. Thompson, Esq., seconded by Dr. McGee, by R. B. Blackiston Houston, Esq., one of the Vice-Presidents, who, having stated that he would act merely as *locum tenens* for his Lordship until he arrived, was just about to proceed to the distribution of the prizes, when Dr. Knox entered the room, amidst the welcoming plaudits of the company. Mr. Houston then vacated the chair in favour of his Lordship.

The Right Rev. CHAIRMAN then briefly addressed the assembly as follows:—My Lord Belfast, ladies and gentlemen, the committee having honoured me by the request that I should take the chair this evening, I need hardly state with what pleasure and satisfaction I do so. (Cheers.) I feel, indeed, great happiness in identifying myself with the institution of the Government School of Design in Belfast. It will not be necessary for me to occupy your time with any lengthened observations on the high objects and superior advantages of such an institution as this. The noble Earl who sits on my right hand has kindly consented to lay before you some details in reference to the connexion of the arts with manufacture; and I feel due to the Earl of Belfast to state that he consented to deliver that address upon only a few hours' notice. (Applause.) And I am sure I speak not my own sentiments merely, but those also of the committee, when I say that the thanks of this meeting are justly due to the noble Earl for having, on so short notice, consented to address you on such an important topic. (Applause.) It will not, therefore, be necessary for me to enter into details which I should otherwise have wished to bring before your notice; but I shall simply observe that the establishment of Schools of Design is calculated greatly to foster native talent, and develop the industrial resources of the community, in connexion with manufactures. These advantages have already been apprehended and appreciated by you, and they need no further comment on my part. I have only to add that the proceeds of the sale of tickets of admission are to be applied to the formation of a Statue-gallery, an object as necessary as it is desirable, with the view of carrying out the operations of this institution. I am sure that all of you who have, so lately as a year ago, witnessed the birth of this School of Design, will do everything in your power to foster and encourage its infancy; nor until that time arrive, which it requires no forecasting of the future to predict must arrive, when this institution has proved itself successful beyond the reach of misfortune, will you cease to protect it in its flourishing maturity.



His LORDSHIP then proceeded to distribute Lord Dufferin's prizes to the successful competitors. Having called the names of Messrs. Hugh Blain, John M'Kenzie, Matthew MacKenzie, Isaac Waugh, Alexander O. Agar, Samuel M'Cloy, and James Ewart, the right rev. chairman addressed them as follows:—In conveying the premiums to the successful candidates for Lord Dufferin and Clanaboy's prizes, I wish to remind you that Lord Dufferin desired you to receive them both as a reward for present success, and as an encouragement for future exertions. His Lordship then presented, in neat purses, the money premiums awarded (as per list of prizes below), to the fortunate competitors, who then withdrew.

CHARLES LANYON, Esq., one of the Vice-Presidents, then proceeded to distribute the school prizes, calling the successful competitors—Messrs. Ebenezer Crawford, Anthony Stannus, J. Hamill, J. Lawson, D. Smith, J. Williamson, H. Brown, T. Fitzpatrick, S. M'Cloy, — Walker, E. Reid, W. B. Morton, and H. Yates—before him, he said—I have to express the great satisfaction of the committee at observing not only the talent indicated by your designs, but the assiduity and zeal which have distinguished your exertions. I have only to add that success always attends industry, and that if you continue to go on in the same honourable way, you will be rewarded by similar success throughout your future career. Mr. Lanyon then delivered to each competitor the reward assigned to him. (Cheers.)

W. THOMPSON, Esq., one of the Vice Presidents, then, with similar expressions of approbation and encouragement, distributed another set of prizes (Mr. Henning's, of Waringstown), one for a damask table-cover, and one for a centre—the former to Joseph Blain, and the latter to John Lawson.

R. B. B. HOUSTON, Esq., then calling before him the three successful competitors for the scholarships, Messrs. James Williamson (Lord Dufferin's £20 scholarship), Ebenezer Crawford (the committee's £15 scholarship), and Samuel M'Cloy (Mr. Houston's own scholarship), addressed them to the following effect:—These scholarships have been awarded with the view of enabling you to prosecute your studies more effectually; and I am sure it will be gratifying to the committee hereafter to be assured, that these inducements have had the effect of inspiring you with further ardour, and them with further confidence. I have to state that this is the first provincial institution of the kind that has yet established scholarships. (Applause.) I trust other Schools of Design will follow in our steps. It is most gratifying to me to see that those parties who are now receiving scholarships, have also gained prizes in many other departments. I trust these will be a stimulus to them to endeavour to acquire proficiency in other branches of education, so that they shall not only prove good designers, but may likewise become distinguished for general ability in various walks of improvement. (Applause.) I have great pleasure in giving to Mr. Williamson the first scholarship—that presented by Lord Dufferin—(cheers)—who, I am sorry, cannot be present to confer it himself. After some personal recommendations to the three successful candidates, as to their duties and prospects, Mr. Houston concluded by handing them their respective awards, which were accepted by them with evident pride and satisfaction amidst the cheers of the assemblage.

JAMES GIBSON, Esq., then came forward to distribute their prizes to the successful female competitors. He said. Though it is my duty now to present the last class of prizes, it so happens that it is not the least class. It will be allowed by all to be, at all events, the most interesting class, and one upon which the hopes of this institution must, in a great measure, rest—I mean the female class of pupils in the Belfast Govern-

ment School of Design. (Loud cheers.) The noble Earl will agree with me, that the female pupils of the school are those who are distinguished for the exquisite taste and superior delicacy of their designs. Notwithstanding all the proficiency at which the male sex may arrive, there is something in the exquisite tenderness, and the susceptibility to the beautiful in woman's nature, which renders them superior in the cultivation of all those arts which refine and beautify our existence. (Continued cheering.) We have to regret that, owing to, I presume, the extreme sensitiveness of the female character—that shrinking diffidence, and that sense of duty which confines woman to the retirement of the domestic circle—so few of the gentler sex have come forward to cultivate the faculties with which nature has endowed them; but I am quite sure that, after a little time, when the school has arrived at a more mature age, the female class of the Government School of Design in Belfast will be found to take the highest status among its pupils, and that the school itself will rival, if not surpass, its continental rivals which are mainly indebted for their success to the designs of female taste and genius. (Cheers.) Without occupying more of your time, therefore, or diverting your attention from the other topics about to be suggested, I now beg to call upon Miss Beggs, Miss Frazer, Miss Morton and Miss Brown, to present themselves for their prizes.

These young ladies having come forward, Mr. Gibson, in a very handsome manner, handed to them the several prizes, amidst loud cheers, after which they withdrew. He then requested the successful competitors in the governess class to come forward, when Miss Brown, Miss M'Caughey and Miss Hart received their prizes at his hands, the company applauding them as they retired.

There were other classes of prizes awarded, as will be seen by the following list, which we have copied from one kindly handed to us by Mr. Nursey, the head master (whose attention and urbanity in affording us every information we required, we are happy to acknowledge), but they were not publicly conferred:—

#### LORD DUFFERIN'S PRIZES.

Best Design for Table-Cloth, Hugh Blain,	
Second ditto, John Mackenzie, ... ..	10 0 0
Best Design for a Muslin Robe, Matthew Mackenzie, ... ..	10 0 0
Best ditto for Chemisette, Isaac Waugh,	5 0 0
Best ditto for Handkerchief, A. O. Agar,	2 0 0
Best ditto for Linen Band, Saml. M'Cloy,	3 0 0
Second ditto, James Ewart, ... ..	1 10 0
Ditto for Box for Cambrics, Saml. M'Cloy,	2 0 0

#### SCHOOL PRIZES.

##### CLASS OF FIGURE FROM THE ROUND.

Best Outline of Figure, E. Crawford, ... ..	£1 10 0
Second ditto, A. Stannus, ... ..	1 0 0
Third ditto, J. Hamill, ... ..	0 10 0

##### CLASS OF ORNAMENT FROM ROUND.

Best Drawing, J. Lawson, ... ..	£1 0 0
Second ditto, D. Smith, ... ..	0 15 0

##### CLASS OF MODELLING.

Model of Hercules Alastor, J. Williamson,	£2 0 0
Ditto of Patera, H. Brown, ... ..	0 15 0
Ditto of —, Fitzpatrick, ... ..	0 15 0

##### CLASS OF FIGURE FROM FLAT.

Best Drawing, A. Stannus, ... ..	£1 0 0
Second ditto, S. M'Cloy, ... ..	0 15 0
Third ditto, Walker, ... ..	0 10 0

##### CLASS OF FLOWERS FROM FLAT.

Best, Edward Reid, ... ..	£1 0 0
Second, W. B. Morton, ... ..	0 10 0

##### CLASS OF ORNAMENT FROM FLAT.

Best, Edward Reid, ... ..	£1 0 0
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Second, Thomas Fitzpatrick, ... ..	0 15 0
Third, Hugh Yates, ... ..	0 10 0

## FEMALE SCHOOL.

## FIGURE FROM FLAT.

Best Drawing, Miss Beggs, ... ..	£0 15 0
Second do., Miss Frazer, ... ..	0 10 0

## FLOWERS AND ORNAMENTS.

Best Drawing, Miss Morton, ... ..	0 15 0
Second, Miss Brown, ... ..	0 10 0

## GOVERNESS CLASS.

## CLASS FOR COLOUR.

Best, Miss Brown, ... ..	...Set of Books.
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## CLASS FOR FIGURE.

Best, Miss McCaughey, ... ..	...Set of Books.
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## CLASS FOR SHADING.

Best, Miss Hart, ... ..	...Set of Books.
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## MR. HENNING'S PRIZES.

Best design for Table Cloth, Joseph Blain, £10 0 0	
Ditto for Centre of Cloth, John Lawson, 5 0 0	

## SCHOLARSHIPS.

Lord Dufferin's (£20), ... ..	James Williamson.
Committee's (£15), ... ..	Ebenezer Crawford.
Mr. R. B. Houston's (£10), ... ..	Samuel McCloy.

[In addition to the above, were the premiums awarded to the successful competitors for the Messrs. J. G. McGee & Co.'s prizes for designs of embroidered vests, which were not included in the above list. We understand that the first prize of £5 was awarded to James Williamson; the second prize was one of £2 10s., to James Ewart; and a third prize of £3 10s. was divided among seven meritorious competitors.]

The following prizes were also distributed:—

To A. Stannus, as a special prize from the Committee, for a drawing from the round, ... ..	£1 10 0
To A. O. Agar, for the best design for a handkerchief to be worked for the Duchess of Sutherland, ... ..	£3 00 0
Second prize for do., S. McCloy, ... ..	£2 0 0

The distribution of the prizes having terminated,

The EARL OF BELFAST rose and proceeded to deliver an address to the meeting. He was greeted with a prolonged burst of cheering. He said:—My Lord Bishop, ladies and gentlemen, the Very Rev. the Bishop of Down has kindly pleaded my cause, and explained the peculiarly unfavourable circumstances under which I appear before you this evening. Indeed, no consideration could have induced me to undertake so responsible an office as that of addressing so distinguished an assembly save one, the great interest which I feel towards anything that may promote the welfare of the town whose name I have the honour to bear; a feeling which has prompted me rather to expose my incapacity than to suffer so good a cause to lack an advocate. (Hear.) I have vividly before me the reply placed by Moliere in the mouth of Alceste, to the nobleman who brings him a sonnet for his criticism, informing him that he only took a quarter of an hour to write it. "The time, sir," replies the misanthrope, "is no consideration whatever." But I venture to hope that my hearers will entertain a more indulgent spirit towards me; and since brevity of time has been, in my case, a matter of compulsion, and not of choice, that they will excuse me, if, instead of presenting to them such an address as the occasion deserves and the theme demands, I merely lay before them what little matter I have been able to collect, and have

hastily endeavoured to mould into such a form as may make it acceptable to my hearers. (Hear, hear.) Horace says that "He has carried every point,"—"Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci"—who has combined the useful with the agreeable. This he applies to literature; but it seems to me that, without taking too great a license, we may extend his dictum to any object that combines the intellectual with the practical, the ornamental with the useful, pleasure with profit—why not art with manufacture? Nor could a better field have been chosen for the venture than on the very ground on which it has been made—in the heart of Ulster: Ulster, whose fabrics have spread far and wide, whose produce adorns the beds of princes and the tables of kings. And what more delightful to one interested in Ireland's well-doing than to see genius going hand in hand with industry—to see the weaver looking to native art for those designs which, in days of yore, he was compelled to seek in foreign lands—(hear)—than to see the wealth of Irish manufacturers passing not into the hands of the stranger, but into those of their fellow-countrymen, whose labours, if rightly guided, may equal, if not excel, the productions of artists of other lands. (Hear, hear.) And in what manner could these great ends be better effected than by the means of such an institution as this? Its promoters have indeed made a praiseworthy endeavour to achieve this worthy and noble project—and that their strenuous workings have brought forth good and early fruit—the report before me satisfactorily proves. It appears that the pupils have already evidenced by their productions, that their instruction in art, and its application to manufacture, has been not only theoretical, but practical. (Hear, hear and cheers.) I need

scarcely allude to the great importance of affording every encouragement and assistance to the sewed muslin trade, which is one of the staple manufactures of this part of Ireland, and which needs no further eulogium, when I say that it affords occupation—and therefore food and sustenance—to half a million of females. (Hear, hear and cheers.) The successful application of native design to this branch of manufacture has been forcibly illustrated this evening by the beautiful specimen of the work which has been exhibited, and which, for purity and truthfulness of design, as well as for excellence of execution, has perhaps never been surpassed. I particularly note its truthfulness, by which I would convey the resemblance of the objects represented to the same objects as they appear in nature. The days are gone now when we are satisfied to look on the willow-pattern plates—the more practised eye demands something nearer approximating to that great instructress, whom the artist should endeavour to keep steadily before his eyes—nature. Ideas of truth are the foundation of all perfection in art, for the very reason that nothing can be beautiful, that is not true. Let not, therefore, discouragement assail the aspirant designer's mind if this very excellence be imputed to him as a fault. Although one of the greatest objects to be aimed at in the study of designs is the fitness of the model for practical use, it should never be forgotten that the highest achievement of the student must be "*celare artem*," and so to preserve verity of form, as to convey alike to all classes of observers the intention with which it was conceived, and the object which it was intended to represent. The triumph over such an objection—one which has been raised—is forcibly shown to-night in the very specimen of work to which I have before alluded; and let the student be assured that the time will soon come—is now at hand, when the diffusion of artistic ideas will drive manufacturers to exceed the narrow and unnatural limits to which they would fain confine their artisans, and, forcing them to



shake off the trammels of conventional forms, compel them to seek, not only an imitation of nature, but a combination of the numerous elements which nature affords, into forms as graceful as they are truthful. (Hear.) Thus will art serve manufacture by forcing her to her excellence; while manufacture, on her part, will encourage art by inciting her votaries to that honourable competition, that generous emulation, which arouses dormant talent into energy, and brings genius, "mute and inglorious," to light. (Hear, hear.) There is another branch of manufacture to which an institution of this nature must prove of inestimable benefit. I allude to the damask fabrics of Ireland, so famed throughout the world. Soon shall the time arrive, when these magnificent specimens of Irish industry, which might well be termed the "banners of Ulster," shall no longer bear the impress of foreign design; when the Irish woof shall look to the Irish pencil, and when, by combination of talent—in the one to conceive, in the other to execute—a degree of excellence shall be attained of which this country may justly be proud. The Great Exhibition of this year shall show the foreigner that Irish art and Irish industry can hold their place, unaided, even among the wonders of the great "World's Fair." Sincerely do I congratulate the promoters of this institution on their brilliant success. This school, yet in its infancy, exhibits signs of promise that augur for it a brilliant destiny. Nor has its rapid progress passed unnoticed. The Board of Trade has conveyed an honourable mark of its approval by an intimation that the grant will be increased in the ensuing financial year; and I say it with pride, that of all the institutions with which this is contemporary, and to many of which it is even junior, it has been the earliest to give evidence of its practical utility, while others have failed to produce designs that could be made available for reproduction. (Cheers.) It appears to me that the managers should turn their attention to the production of good designs for paper hangings. This commodity is now much sought for, and the manufacture of it much encouraged in these parts, and it must be a matter of regret that large sums should be paid to French designers, when it affords, perhaps, more scope for truthful and elegant imitations of nature than almost any other branch of manufacture. (Hear, hear.) In congratulating the pupils upon their very distinguished success, which may, I trust, incite them to perseverance in the path which they have entered (and which, I feel sure, they have found flowery and pleasant to tread), I feel tempted to bring under their notice what Alison says of design, and of the relative beauty of forms:—"Every work," says the eminent scholar, in his Essay on Taste, "every work of design may be considered in one or other of the following lights: Either in relation to the art or design which produced it—to the nature of its construction for the purpose or end intended—or to the nature of the end which it is thus destined to serve; and its beauty thus depends, either upon the excellence of their design, upon the fitness or propriety of their construction, or upon the utility of their end. The considerations of design, fitness, and of utility, therefore, may be considered as the three great sources of the relative beauty of forms." There are but two points in the report of the committee which form an exception to the satisfaction with which the progress of the institution may be regarded. The first is the very small attendance of females in the public classes. The report goes on very properly to express its regret that this should be the case; and I see with some astonishment that while the male classes have reached the number of 150, the highest number of females on the books is but seventeen. I am quite at a loss to conceive the motive of this reluctance on their part; and especially where so much talent is shown in the

execution of work of every sort—embroidery—lace-making, &c., &c.—It is surprising that the desire should be so utterly wanting to originate any design which they could afterwards so cleverly carry out. (Hear, hear.) I trust that these fair ones will be led to see their error, and they will learn that one of the most pleasurable of sensations is—even in so humble a matter as needlework—to feel that one is carrying out an original idea, which one has been gifted with the imagination to conceive, and the talent to execute. (Hear, hear.) Another improvement much needed for the furtherance of the objects which the school of design has in view, is the building of such a gallery as shall be fitted, both by its size and its construction, to contain the casts, models, and specimens of sculpture which the institution already possesses, and to the number of which it is confidently expected that the liberality of the Board of Trade, and the generosity of private individuals, will make considerable additions. (Hear.) Indeed, the Board of Trade has expressed its readiness to add largely to the collection, if room be provided to receive its contributions. Who, that has read Eustace's beautiful work—the "Classical Tour,"—can have forgotten the eloquence with which he compares the statues as they stood in the Vatican, with the same statues as they appeared when removed to Paris by the rapacity of the French. How forcibly does he contrast the "floods of light that fell on the Apollo's shoulders," with the dingy sombre halls, ("stables" I believe he calls them) to which they were consigned, when, torn from their pedestals, they fell a prey to the "rude uncivil touch" of the ignorant Gaul. Immeasurably, indeed, do these beautiful models lose in being immured in narrow and ill-lighted chambers, and to such a receptacle are they here consigned. It is almost essentially necessary to the proper disposal of lights and shadows that the rays should fall from above the model; still more, that each figure should be so placed, that the student who has selected it for his copy should see it, as it were, isolated from other statues, which, by the difference of their proportions, are apt to confuse the artist's eye, and materially interfere with his progress. In the present gallery this cannot be done; though few, at present, the models are even now, of necessity, so crowded, that it is difficult to form a clear conception of the individual excellence of each, without finding that the attention is drawn off by the close vicinity of so many other similar objects. It is gratifying to find, from the report, that this great desideratum is likely to be gained; and I sincerely hope, that all who take an interest in the matter will assist the efforts of the committee in executing this plan, and thereby removing almost the only obstacle which, at present, tends to mar the success of the Government scheme. (Applause.) Thus have I feebly endeavoured to discuss the "utile"—the practical merits of the institution. I have sought to show how, by the establishment of schools of this nature, the firm, but hitherto undecorated, pillars of Irish commerce have received their Corinthian capitals, and have been transformed from columns of rude solidity into supports no less solid, though more refined and graceful. I have tried to convey to the minds of my hearers how desirable it is that the eye of the workman should be taught to seek refreshment in forms of beauty—(hear, hear)—how the artist and the manufacturer shall henceforth join hands, and, labouring together for their individual weal, shall promote at once the prosperity and the glory of their country. (Hear, hear.) It has been my aim to prove that, by establishments of this nature, Ireland has, like her lovely emblem, the shamrock, united on one stem the three requisites for her perfection. First, in her soil, which yields to the toil of the labourer flax of a quality which no foreign growth can equal; secondly, in the



skilful hands of her artisans, who can produce from the native plant a fabric unrivalled in beauty of texture; and, thirdly, in the mind of the artist, which stamps upon that fabric a home-born design, which shall rival the imaginings of competitors of all nations. (Cheers.) Thus shall this country send forth a fabric which, by its completeness, shall prove that "unity is strength;" and that we need no aid, save such as can be found within the limits of our fertile and beautiful shores, to attain a concentrated superiority (if I may so express myself) which individual excellence in any one, alone, of these requisites shall vainly seek to emulate. There yet remains another part of my subject which I shall but briefly discuss—a portion of the subject, I say, more congenial to myself than even that on which I have spoken; for I have even been an humble votary of the Muses, and if I have preferred one of the Nine, I am quite alive to her sisters' merits. And feeling on this subject, as all who love the fine arts must feel, I rejoice extremely to see the assistance which the State affords to the lower classes in their improvement, and in the cultivation of taste; which ennobles the mind, promotes peace and harmony among mankind, and will tend, perhaps, far more than threats or edicts, to restore tranquillity and content, to promote harmony, and quell disaffection. It is not only to the poorer classes that this institution holds out its advantages. Private classes have been formed, and well attended, consisting of persons of higher degree; and this should be especially considered as one of the leading characteristics of this school, that, while it instructs its humbler pupils to execute, it also instructs the more wealthy to appreciate what they have achieved. Nor can too much be said in praise of the institution of scholarships, which prove the means of enabling the poor artisan to leave his manual toil for certain hours in the day, and compensate him for the loss of wages thus sustained. No man, in general, is sensible to beauty in those subjects with regard to which he has not previous ideas. The beauty of a theory, or of a relic of antiquity, is unintelligible to a peasant. In the same manner, the more our ideas are increased, or our conception extended on any subject, the greater the number of associations we connect with it; the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty which the sight of it imparts. To the student in the imitative arts a new world is open; the scales have fallen from before his eyes; everything which he formerly beheld with indifference now appears to him in a new light; he may be unable to account for the pleasurable emotion now occasioned by the sight of objects once unheeded, but he feels that it exists, and it is that very mystery, that very incapacity of analysing his sensations, that occasions the emotions within him—that true joy of the artist which lifts him above this world into one unseen, yet all his own! (Cheers.) These observations may, at first, appear unsuited to the occasion; but I think that, on reflection, it will be admitted that the holding out of such hopes is not ill-timed. Genius is no respecter of persons. Genius is found under the peasant's roof as frequently as in the dwellings of the great; and if there is more difficulty in bursting its fetters when humility of condition seems to chain its possessor to the drudgery of daily labour, while his mind is soaring far away, then should a two-fold bond of gratitude be felt towards those who hold out the means whereby the latent spark is carefully fostered and cherished till its brilliancy illumine the world. (Hear, hear, and loud cheers.) What depth of gratitude will not be felt by one whom this school may disinter from the obscurity which envelopes his existence, and guides into the path of those great men whose memory will be glorious to the end of time—whose immortal works call forth admiration from successive ages—and whose undying names still form the

beacons of rising genius. What gratitude will not posterity owe to these institutions, if but one name be made to live, by their agency, to future ages!—if but one worthy aspirant be, by them, guided into the field of high art—that boundless expanse where true genius will ever find a place! Great men, in all ages, have been seen to spring from comparative obscurity, even though their first steps have not been guided in the right path. The principal obstacle in the way of those whose genius lay in the range of art has been, that they have met discouragement in their early endeavours, by the want of those practical means—by want of the mechanism (if I may so express myself)—necessary to the realisation of their conceptions. But here this difficulty is removed. He who feels the virtue within him may now come forward and receive instruction in those first elements which will enable him, if he be really a man of genius, to outstep the narrow bounds of mere art-manufacture, and soar forth on his own wings to the pinnacle of greatness which he may at least aspire to reach. Nothing is so necessary to the perfection of an artist as that his early footsteps should be well directed. The self-taught genius, who has alone acquired a certain degree of perfection, will find it doubly irksome to return to the rudiments which he needs must acquire to be a true artist; he will find it difficult to unlearn bad habits, which, perhaps, he has looked upon as merits; and the want of patience and perseverance will often cause him to abandon in disgust a pursuit which, had he possessed these requisites, might have led him to eminence. (Hear, and cheers.) To smooth the path of the young artist should, therefore, be the chief aim and object of those who have the management of such an institution as this; to encourage talent when displayed; to avoid any restrictions

that may curb or circumscribe the flight of genius; and yet, so to watch these birds of early promise, that they trust not too confidently to the strength of their pinions, lest they sink, with broken wing, in the regions of boundless and unknown space. Their chief object should be to instil into the youthful mind the necessity for persevering study, which alone can produce an artist; to direct his attention to the evidences of intense application, manifested in the works of the great masters whom it must be his aim to emulate; and, above all, to point out the perfections in Nature's smallest work—the wonderful stupendousness of the creations of God.

"Sweet is the joy when science flings  
Her light o'er philosophic thought;  
And genius, with keen ardour, springs  
To seize the lovely truth she sought!"

Wishing this institution every prosperity, cherishing a hope that much talent may spring from its walls that shall aid the manufactures, and promote the commerce of Ireland; and with a hope still more exalted, that more than one name, now obscure, may, through its agency, live to immortality—(loud cheers)—I shall conclude by quoting a beautiful passage from Dr. Akenside, in which he pours, in glowing language, the aspirations, the ecstasies of an artist's soul:—

"Know then, whate'er of Nature's pregnant stores,  
Whate'er of mimic art's reflected forms,  
With love and admiration thus inflame  
The powers of Fancy, her delighted sons  
To three illustrious orders have refer'd;  
Three sister-graces, whom the painter's hand,  
The poet's tongue, confesses; the sublime,  
The wonderful, the fair. I see them dawn!  
I see the radiant visions, where they rise,  
More lovely than when Lucifer displays  
His beaming forehead through the gates of morn,  
To lead the train of Phœbus and the Spring."  
(Great applause.)



which was the production of Mr. Samuel M'Cloy; and the second prize, that of Mr. James Ewart, were greatly and deservedly admired. The former consisted of an arrangement of hawthorn leaves and Mayblossoms from nature, in gold, white, and pink; and the other, a tracery of various plants from nature, in green, gold, and other colours, with a neat vignette of the Belfast quays, and Cave Hill in the distance, as the centre-piece. These designs were ably executed by Mr. Thos. M'Cracken, of Crown Entry, who also exhibited some designs of linen headings of his own, which did him infinite credit. We understand that so much have the prize designs been approved of by the manufacturers of the neighbourhood, that orders for them to a large amount have been already given—a decided proof that native art and genius will nowhere meet with a better market than in liberal, enlightened Belfast. Indeed, with regard to these first fruits of the success of our School of Design, we question whether anything more poetically fanciful, chaste, or natural in design ever came over even from France, where this branch of art has long most successfully flourished. We observed, also, in this room, some specimens of linen headings contributed by Mr. Miller, of Castle Street.

#### UPPER ELEMENTARY CLASS-ROOMS.

Our steps were next directed to a more minute examination of the important display afforded by this room, than could be obtained during the proceedings which took place while the prizes were being distributed. Here were arranged along the walls the drawings of the public pupils of the school, to the number of several hundreds, and, admittedly creditable as this exhibition was, it must be mentioned that many of the very best specimens produced by the pupils did not

appear, as fifty of these were a short time since sent over for the annual exhibition at Marlborough House, London, by the direction of the Board of Trade; and thirty have been forwarded for exhibition in the Crystal Palace, Hyde Park, where it is confidently anticipated that the Belfast School of Design will stand second to none in the empire, considering that it is little more than a year in active operation. The drawings are yet merely in outline, as the pupils are not yet sufficiently advanced for instruction in shading or colouring. They are, however, such as to give the most perfect assurance of the future excellence of most of the pupils, and reflect the highest credit on the ability and zeal of Mr. Nursey, the accomplished master of the school. They were universally admired by the company. Of course it would be alike invidious and impossible to criticise minutely the various performances. A great variety of Belfast manufactured articles, contributed by various eminent firms in the town, formed, however, the leading features of the display. We shall first notice a superb upright piano-forte, the frame-work of which is composed of solid ebony, most admirably and fancifully, yet classically carved. The designs introduced into the carving are those of Mr. Anthony Stannus, one of the students of the school. In front, they consist of an open arabesque, with the words, "Erin go bragh," most ingeniously involved in the pattern. The back of the instrument is fashioned in

mahogany, with perforated scroll work of great beauty, in the midst of which the figures 1851 are elegantly introduced in cypher so as to form part of the pattern. We should state also that a harp is admirably carved in the upper part of the framework. The whole is a piece of art which we have never seen equalled in its way. We understand that the tone of the instrument is perfect. It is intended for the "World's fair." We were much pleased with an inspection, among the articles exhibited in this room, of a table painted by Mr. Moore, of Arthur-street, in imitation of rare foreign marbles and spar, inlaid. This beautiful work of art was greatly admired for the perfect imitation of the various marbles, the whole having as great a depth of colouring and fineness of surface as if it had been real marble.

We observed the Earl of Belfast inspecting it with evident marks of satisfaction; and, at a subsequent period of the evening, his Lordship drew to it the attention of several ladies and gentlemen. Afterwards, this exquisite table received the commendations of Lord and Lady Gough, as well as of all who had the pleasure of beholding a specimen so creditable to the establishment of our townsman. It is but due to Mr. Moore to say that he has exerted himself very much to raise and improve the style of decorative house-painting, and has, for several years past, been executing work in that line in the houses of many of the nobility, leading gentry and merchants of the North, equal to anything of the kind produced in either England or Scotland. Perhaps the most interesting display in this room was that of a number of richly embroidered vests, from the establishment of Messrs. J. G. M'Gee & Co., for the designs of which that spirited firm obtained an honorary certificate at the "Triennial exhibition of native manufactures in Dublin."

The patterns are wrought upon all descriptions of cloth for dress vests, and are of wonderful beauty and excellence. This is the first attempt at embroidering vests from any special designs whatever in this kingdom. Mr. M'Gee was induced to undertake it from what Lord Dufferin stated in his address at the last meeting, and we are happy to know that the attempt is admirably succeeding, the patterns bringing large prices, in consequence of the manufacture being entirely new. The other tables in the room were occupied as follows:—One with a display of cut glass, from the Belfast and Ballymacarrett flint glass works; one by a splendid array of epergnes vases, clocks, &c., from Mr. Gilbert's, High Street; one by a collection of sewed muslins, from Messrs. Lindsay's, designed and manufactured in Belfast; and one by many elegant specimens of book-binding, from Messrs. Ward, Corn Market. We omitted to mention, in its proper place, the beautiful handkerchief worked (from Mr. Agar's design) for the Duchess of Sutherland, at Lord Dufferin's Industrial School at Killileagh, under Mrs. M'Crea's superintendence.

The company were highly pleased and gratified with the results of their inspection, and did not retire for upwards of an hour after the termination of the proceedings in the Elementary Class Room.